

Message Text

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 202021Z JUN 77

FM AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3558

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

ALL OTHER AMCONSULS IN CANADA (POUCH)

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: BRITISH COLUMBIA VIEWS ON QUEBEC SEPARATISM:
QUARTERLY UPDATE

REF: A.76 VANCOUVER 1309; B. VANCOUVER 235, C. VANCOUVER 328

1. SUMMARY: THERE HAS BEEN CONSPICUOUS CONSOLIDATION OF THE B.C. PUBLIC VIEW THAT QUEBEC SHOULD REMAIN IN A UNITED CANADA. PREMIER BENNETT'S THESIS THAT CONFEDERATION SHOULD BE RESHAPED THROUGH THE TRANSFER OF A NUMBER OF FEDERAL POWERS TO FIVE REGIONAL GROUPINGS AND THAT A STRONG CANADIAN ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE WOULD END THE SEPARATIST THREAT CONTINUES TO RECEIVE SCANT PUBLIC OR MEDIA SUPPORT. WHILE INCREASINGLY WILLING TO SEEK WAYS TO ASSUAGE QUEBEC SENTIMENTS, BRITISH COLUMBIANS ARE ON GUARD TO THE POSSIBILITY PM TRUDEAU MIGHT USE THE SEPARATIST THREAT TO OBTAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGES FOR HIS GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE OUR LAST REPORT ON THIS SUBJECT (REFTEL B), THERE

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HAS BEEN CONSPICUOUS CONSOLIDATION OF THE THEN WIDELY HELD VIEW THAT QUEBEC SHOULD REMAIN IN A UNITED CANADA. QUEBEC SEPARATISM IS SEEN AS AN ALL-CANADA PROBLEM TO BE RESOLVED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WITHOUT RESORT TO FORCE AND WITHOUT HAVING TO BEG QUEBEC TO REMAIN IN THE CONFEDERATION. MANY INFLUENTIAL BRITISH COLUMBIANS HAVE PICKED UP ONTARIO PREMIER DAVIS' CALL FOR A PERIOD OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

TO MAKE QUEBECERS FEEL THEY HAVE GOOD REASONS -- OTHER THAN THE ECONOMIC -- FOR REMAINING PART OF CANADA.

3. VANCOUVER MAYOR VOLRICH IN MID-MAY KICKED OFF A "DECLARATION OF TOGETHERNESS," WHICH IS BEING CIRCULATED FOR SIGNATURE, TO URGE BRITISH COLUMBIANS "TO PUT ASIDE ANY APATHY THEY MIGHT BEFORE HAVE FELT ABOUT THE NATIONAL UNITY QUESTION AND TO JOIN IN WITH HUNDREDS OF THEIR FELLOW CANADIANS ACROSS B.C. IN PETITIONING THEIR NATIONAL CONFERES TO SOLVE OUR MUTUAL PROBLEMS TOGETHER." A VANCOUVER SUN EDITORIAL APPLAUDED THE MAYOR'S ACTION -- HOWEVER "CORNY" AND "SCHMALTZY" -- AND URGED OTHERS TO FOLLOW THE MAYOR'S MODEL AND "VERVE." THE SUN DECLARED THAT "WHEN THE LEADERS AND THE LEARNED AND OTHER ELITES HAVE MADE AND EXHAUSTED ALL THEIR CLEVER ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE IT WILL BE THE SENTIMENTS OF THE ORDINARY PEOPLE THAT WILL CARRY THE FIELD . . . IT WILL BE WHAT THE HEART FEELS, AND WHAT THE HEART DICTATES TO THE MIND, THAT WILL DECIDE WHICH WAY CANADA AND QUEBEC GO. ONLY THEN CAN THE TERMS BE WORKED OUT."

4. IN THE SAME VEIN, THE NINETY-YEAR OLD VANCOUVER BOARD OF TRADE, WESTERN CANADA'S LARGEST AND PROBABLY MOST INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS ORGANIZATION WITH OVER 3,000 MEMBERS, RECENTLY ISSUED AN ELOQUENT AND UNEQUIVOCAL STATEMENT OF POSITION ON NATIONAL UNITY INVITING THE URGING ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CANADIANS "TO MAKE THEIR OWN PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF ONE UNDIVIDED CANADA AND TO MAKE THAT COMMITMENT PUBLICLY."

5. AT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL, PREMIER BENNETT IS MAKING IT A PRACTICE IN HIS CABINET TOURS AROUND BRITISH COLUMBIA TO SPEAK OUT FOR A UNITED COUNTRY, EMPHASIZING THAT CANADA HAS "EARNED THE RESPECT OF THE REST OF THE WORLD" AND THAT WITH OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SUCCESS, "IT'S TOO MUCH TO THROW AWAY." BENNETT'S RECURRING THEME (SEE REFTELS A AND B) REMAINS ONE OF A LESS CENTRALIZED FEDERAL STRUCTURE IN WHICH FIVE "STRONGER" REGIONS (B.C., PRAIRIES, ONTARIO, QUEBEC, AND THE MARITIMES) OF CANADA WOULD HAVE MORE TO SAY ABOUT MATTERS PRESENTLY UNDER FEDERAL JURISDICTION THAT AFFECT THEM AND HE CONTINUES TO STATE A STRONG ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE BY CANADA WOULD BRING AN END TO THE SEPARATISM SENTIMENT. HIS VIEWS ON HOW CONFEDERATION SHOULD BE RESHAPED, HOWEVER, RECEIVE SCANT PUBLIC SUPPORT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA. MAYOR VOLRICH, IN A RECENT ROTARY CLUB SPEECH IN MONTREAL, BLUNTLY STATED THAT MOST WESTERN CANADIANS FAVOR CONFEDERATION AND MOST REJECT PROPOSALS TO RESHAPE THE COUNTRY INTO SEPARATE

ECONOMIC-POLITICAL REGIONS. THE IDEA, HE SAID, OF "CARVING UP CANADA" INTO FIVE DISTINCT REGIONS "IS YET ANOTHER FORM OF SEPARATISM -- AND I REJECT IT." THE VANCOUVER SUN TAKES MUCH THE SAME POSITION AND, IN FACT, CARRIES IT A STEP FURTHER SAYING THE PROBLEM WITH CANADA IS THAT IT HAS TOO MANY GOVERNMENTS AND POWER TOO DISPERSED TO DEAL WITH THE REALLY IMPORTANT PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE AND RESOURCE POLICY, ETC. "IN FACT, WHAT'S NEEDED IS A STRONGER, NOT A WEAKER FEDERAL POWER."

6. WHILE THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT BRITISH COLUMBIANS

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ARE WILLING TO DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY, SHORT OF WAR OR GENUFLECTION, TO KEEP QUEBEC FROM SEPARATING, THE SUSPICION HAS ARISEN THAT PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU MIGHT BE CONNING THEM INTO ACCEPTING CHANGES OR ACCOMMODATIONS IN CONFEDERATION THEY DON'T WANT MERELY TO PLACATE A QUEBEC THAT MAY NOT REALLY WANT TO SEPARATE FROM CANADA ANYWAY. A SUN EDITORIAL OF APRIL 21 WARNS AGAINST THIS DANGER: "THE UNDERLYING THEME OF MR. TRUDEAU'S APPROACHES TO ENGLISH CANADIANS IS THAT THEY SHOULD RELY ON HIM MORE THAN ANYBODY ELSE TO SAVE CONFEDERATION, THAT IT WILL BE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE FEDERAL LIBERALS, WHO WILL BEAT THE PQ. THE APPEAL, IT SEEMS TO US, IS TO GET ENGLISH CANADIANS TO GO ALONG WITH HIM AND THE LIBERALS RATHER THAN TO MAKE THEIR OWN CONTRIBUTION TO A NEW CONFEDERATION ... IF IT (QUEBEC) STAYS IN A

NEW CONFEDERATION WHICH IS NOT REALLY WANTED BY THE
MAJORITY OF CANADIANS, HOW COULD WE SAY THINGS HAVE CHANGED
FOR THE BETTER? EITHER WAY WE WOULD ALL BE VICTIMS,
FRENCH AND ENGLISH CANADIANS ALIKE."

7. WE EXPECT THAT BRITISH COLUMBIANS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL
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WILL INCREASINGLY SEEK OUT WAYS TO ASSUAGE QUEBEC
SENTIMENTS AND WILL BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT TRUDEAU'S
EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE QUEBEC ISSUE AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT
APPEAR TO THEM THAT HE IS USING THE SEPARATIST THREAT
PRIMARILY TO OBTAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE FOR HIMSELF AND
HIS LIBERAL GOVERNMENT. LUPPI

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